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ABSTRACT

A study examined two 1989 basal reading series' (published by McGraw Hill and Holt) readiness/priming sequences in order to ascertain the theoretical bases of each and then compared the findings with those of an earlier study. All pages of the readiness/priming sequence student texts and workbooks of both basal reading series were analyzed using the Program Profile Continuum Survey of Readiness in the Basal Reader. Results indicated that the readiness/priming sequences provided with basal reading series focus predominantly on the grapho-phonic cueing system, ignoring the semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic cueing systems required by the psycholinguistic theory of reading. Results also indicated that regardless of the use of such terms as "emergent literacy" in the philosophical and merchandizing statements, publishers of basal series continue with the word recognition practices of viewing letters and sounds of letters as prerequisites to reading. (Ten tables of data are included. Evaluation instruments, additional tables of data, and 53 references are attached.) (RS)

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READINESS IN THE BASAL READER: AN UPDATE

by

Pamela Perkins, Ph.D.

Paper presented at the

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READINESS IN THE BASAL READER: AN UPDATE

Introduction

The past three decades have provided rich research in regard to early literacy (Durkin, 1966; Dykstra, 1968; Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Y. Goodman, 1984, 1986; Harste, Woodward, & Burke, 1984; Pappas, 1986; Sulzby, 1985, Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Vygotsky, 1962; Wells, 1986) and a young child's concept of story (Applebee, 1978; Stein, 1978; Stein & Trabasso, 1981). While studies of traditional practices in reading instruction (Borko, Eisenhart, Kello, & Vandett, 1984; Carbo, 1988; Collins, 1981; Duffy, Roehler & Putnam, 1987; Elkind, 1988 a,b; Johnson & Baumann, 1984; Simons & Ammon, 1988; Weinstein, 1986) find little support for homogeneous grouping in order to teach a scientifically determined hierarchy of skills, such practices and related commercial materials continue to dominate reading instruction in primary and elementary schools throughout the U.S.

Basal readers are used in the majority of classrooms (Applebee, Langer, Mullis, 1988; Durkin, 1986, 1987a; Goodman, Freeman, Murphy, Shannon, 1988; Shannon, 1983, 1987; Smith, 1965; Venezky, 1987). The publishers of American basal readers provide one or two readiness workbooks, three preprimers, and a primer to be completed before entering the First Reader, complying with the industry-wide concept of a necessity for a readiness/priming sequence which teaches words and skills as prerequisites to success in the program which follows. Not a single American basal reader publisher advertises its readiness/priming

sequence as providing impoverished word-bound text, letter names and sounds as a prerequisite for reading, a predominance of decontextualized skills, nor activities that encourage little originality on the part of teachers and students. However, through 1987, each American basal reader publisher provided just that.

Earlier, the readiness/priming sequences of six basal reader series with copyright dates of 1986-87 were studied in order to ascertain the theoretical bases of each (Perkins, 1988). In this paper, two basal reader series published in 1989 are analyzed and compared with the findings of the earlier study to understand the direction of the current (1989) basal readers in regard to the first steps in their programs.

Research Questions

Are the theoretical orientations of the publishers of the basal reader series toward readiness for reading, as demonstrated by workbooks, preprimers, the primer, and teacher's manuals similar to six series published prior to 1988?

What impact has research in the areas of emergent literacy and psycholinguistics had on basal reader readiness materials?

In regard to the first research question, there are two categories of reading theory: word recognition and psycholinguistic. According to word recognition theory (LaBerge & Samuels, 1985), reading is a result of decoding and recognizing words automatically. Therefore, proficiency in reading is gained by learning about letters, sounds, and words. According to psycholinguistic theory (K. Goodman, 1984), proficiency in reading involves gaining control over four simultaneous cueing systems: semantic, syntactic, grapho-phonic, and pragmatic.

Associated with the two theories are very different views of readiness, language, learner, and teacher (Freeman, 1987; Perkins, 1988). This research examines the readiness/priming sequence materials provided by basal reader companies in order to establish their theoretical bases of readiness and language and views of learner and teacher. Publishers' marketing strategies include eclectic statements which seem to cover all possibilities. It requires a page-by-page analysis to ascertain the intent and theoretical base of "stories" and activities included in the books and workbooks.

Instruments and Methods for Data Collection and Analysis

The Program Profile Continuum Survey of Readiness in the Basal Reader is used to organize data gathered by categorizing workbook pages in order to determine the theoretical basis of those activities. A matrix for determining general readiness or specific reading theory and a checklist for decontextualized or minimally contextualized skills or contextualized strategies is used for the first category of the continuum. On the continuum, activities fall into either word recognition theory or psycholinguistic theory of reading. In connected text (stories), entries are categorized as synthetic (created to use certain words), adapted (to use certain words), or authentic. The nature of the text indicates the theoretical base of the series. The overriding demand of the word recognition theory approach to beginning reading is that of vocabulary control, the prime reason for the construction of preprimer and primer "stories" that use a particular

vowel pattern or selected words over and over but provide little cohesion and semantic or syntactic support.

1. Program Profile Continuum Survey of Readiness in the Basal Reader (Appendix A)

   a. General Readiness/Specific Reading Theory Matrix (Appendix B)

   b. Decontextualized Skills - Contextualized Strategies Checklist (Appendix C)

The Principal Investigator coded all pages of the readiness/priming sequence student texts and workbooks. To check for reliability, three primary teachers, Kathryn Sproul, Gail Pepe, and Vanessa Smith, read each piece of connected text (story in preprimers and primer) and coded each of the pages in the K, R, and K-R workbooks. When our coding did not coincide, we returned to those few pages and found that either a mistake had been made or that one of us had been influenced by the publisher's label of that skill rather than analyzing the direction given to children in order to complete the page.

Program Profile Continuum Survey of Readiness in the Basal Reader

The Program Profile Continuum Survey of Readiness in the Basal Reader is adapted from the Program Profile Instrument originally developed by Goodman and Page (1978) for the purpose of evaluating reading comprehension programs in the middle grades. It is revised to incorporate features specific to reading in Spanish (Freeman, 1987) and for aspects of reading found at all grade levels (Goodman, Shannon, Freeman, & Murphy, 1988). Freeman (1987) developed the Program Profile

Continuum Survey as a modified version of the original Program Profile Instrument for her study of Spanish basals. The Freeman continuum is tailored to analyze the major issues of readiness, language, learning, and teaching in the basal readers.

The Program Profile Continuum Survey of Readiness in the Basal Reader is divided into four categories: readiness, language, learning, and teaching. Each of the four categories is further divided as follows:

I. Readiness

General Readiness vs. Specific Reading Skills
Major Program Focus
Relationship of Phonics & Letter Knowledge to Reading
Approach to Print in Connected Text
Purpose for Reading

II. Language

Nature of the Text
Purpose for Text

III. Learning

Views of Learning
Views of the Learner

IV. Teaching

Teacher's Role
Pedagogical Approaches
Grouping
Approach to Readiness/Reading Problems
Curriculum Thrusts
Presentation of Curriculum

Basal Reader Series Included in Study

The earlier study focused on six series published in 1986 and 1987: Economy (1986), Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich (1987), Houghton Mifflin (1986), Macmillan Connections (1987), Scott, Foresman (1987), and Scribner (1987). The teacher's manuals and student workbooks were examined to determine what aspects of reading readiness students experienced, making clear the implicit and explicit theoretical basis used by the publishers.

Publishers of the 1989 Basal Series with Titles

Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Reading Today and Tomorrow 1989

Level	Title
K (R)	Rainbows
1 (R)	Sundrops
2 PP 1	Surprises
3 PP 2	Treasures
4 PP 3	Kingdoms
5 P	Snapshots

McGraw-Hill Reading 1989

Level	Title
A (K)	Share a Secret
B (R)	Up to the Sky
C PP1	Good Day
D PP2	Make Way
E PP3	Peek In
F P	Upon a Shore

View of Readiness

Results of similar research of the 1986-87 readiness/priming sequences of six series found them to be based almost entirely on word recognition theory of reading (Appendix A), in direct contrast with psycholinguistic statements included in teacher's manuals and promotional statements. Results of the analysis of the 1989 series are remarkably similar in several ways.

General Readiness or Specific Reading Theory

In the 1988 study there was a total of 3,031 pages of readiness/priming workbook pages provided by the six series in that study. Activities commonly considered general readiness skills include oral language development, eye-hand coordination and directionality. Positional terms such as top, bottom, left, right, under, and over also appear to be considered important to the basal reader publishers' concept of readiness. Pages which focus upon concepts such as color, shape, patterns, and size are included in at least one level by most publishers.

Although many primary teachers consider phonics a kind of general readiness for school (Durkin, 1987a), sound-symbol relationships are only considered a prerequisite for reading according to the word recognition theory of reading (Groff, 1987). Therefore, phonics, letters, sounds, words, sentences, stories, and comprehension-related activities are considered specific reading skills, rather than readiness. According to psycholinguistic theory, children join the literate world of reading/writing through their active involvement in a literate environment provided both at home and at school, parallel to their joining the speaking/listening world, where language is not broken into component bits and taught through "direct instruction, guided practice, and independent practice".

Table 1 shows a composite of the findings of the page by page search using the Perkins General Readiness/ Specific Reading Theory Matrix, designed to discriminate general readiness from specific reading activities. For the six publishers in the earlier study, approximately 11% of all of the workbook activities in the levels which precede the First Reader fit into general readiness theory. The remaining 89% fall within the word recognition theory of reading, predominantly within the sound-letter domain. In 1989, 9% were found to be general readiness with the remaining 91% specific reading skills. This minor difference does not appear to indicate an important change.

Table 1 GENERAL READINESS - SPECIFIC READING SKILLS
Levels K, K-R, R PP1, PP2, PP3, & PRIMER

	TOTAL workbook pages	GENERAL READINESS %	pages	SPECIFIC READING %	pages	Other %	pages
Six series 1986-87	3,031	(10.6%)	320	(89%)	2,700	(.4%)	11
Two series 1989	856	(9%)	77	(91%)	779		

Following are the results of the page-by-page categorization of workbook pages in levels K through Primer, the entire readiness/priming sequence. Each series is recorded separately in Table 2.

Table 2 GENERAL READINESS Each Book Each Publisher

level	TOTAL GNRL READINESS	nonprint	inc.print	print	%GNRL RDNS
Holt					
K	48	16	9	6 1	33%
R	74	6	3	3	8%
PP1	62	0			0
PP2	62	0			0
PP3	62	0			0
P	94	0			0
McGraw-Hill					
K	126	48	30	17 1	38%
R	94	7	3	4 0	7%
PP1	40	0			0
PP2	50	0			0
PP3	50	0			0
P	94	0			0

SPECIFIC READING SKILLS Each Book Each Publisher

level	TOTAL SPCF READING	nonprint	inc.print	print	%SPCF RDNG
Holt					
K	48	32	19	1 12	67%
R	74	68	13	0 55	92%
PP1	62	62	6	0 56	100%
PP2	62	62	0	2 60	100%
PP3	62	62	0	0 62	100%
P	94	94	0	0 94	100%
McGraw-Hill					
K	126	78	35	2 41	62%
R	94	87	5	2 80	96%
PP1	40	40	0	0 40	100%
PP2	50	50	0	0 50	100%
PP3	50	50	0	0 50	100%
P	94	94	0	0 94	100%

A comparison to the result of similar analysis of the 1986-87 basal reader series (Appendix D) indicates that the industry-wide formula for activities for general readiness and specific reading in workbooks in the readiness/priming sequence persists.

Decontextualized Skills - Contextualized Strategies

Although promises are made that indicate that there is an emphasis on contextualization of strategies in the basal reader readiness/priming sequence, the 1988 study found that 78% of the pages in the K and R workbooks were based on decontextualized skills (listed in Table 3) as opposed to minimally contextualized strategies (listed in Table 3). In the two 1989 series, there appears to be a purposeful change in the proportion of decontextualized skills (66%), with an increase in minimally contextualized strategies. Contextualized strategies, however, require authentic reasons for learning beyond completing a worksheet chosen for both teacher and children by a publisher.

Table 3 DECONTEXTUALIZED SKILLS - CONTEXTUALIZED STRATEGIES
LEVELS K and R in 1989 Series

Decontextualized Skills		
Positional, Directionality, Order, Eye-hand	13	4%
Relationships, Categories, Classification	19	6%
Color, Shape, Patterns, Size	16	5%
Numeral Identification and Counting	5	1%
Name Pictures and Objects	1	*
Phonics, Rhyming, Letter Recognition/Form	162	47%
Word Identification and Matching	10	3%
Total Pages of Decontextualized Skills	**226**	**(66%)**
Minimally Contextualized Skills		
Oral Language Development	6	2%
Comprehension, Sequence, Cause-Effect, Main Idea	52	15%
Predict Outcomes	4	1%
Whole Sentences	23	7%
Story or Wordless Picture Story	25	7%
Poetry, Reality vs. Fantasy, Story Structure	6	2%
Total Pages Minimally Contextualized	**116**	**(34%)**
Total Pages	**342**	

In the 1989 series, there are proportionately fewer workbook pages directed at the phonics/letter level in the readiness sequence preceding connected text in the preprimers (47% as compared to 53%). The major reduction at phonics/letter/word level instruction is at the word level (from 9% to 3%). The teacher's manual and the practice/reteaching booklets provided for students who are perceived as nonproficient in phonics, assures, however, that there are more pages available, although not necessarily required of the more proficient children.

The Relationship of Phonics and Word to Print

In the earlier research, work directed at phonics and letters comprised 53% of the K and R workbook pages with another 9% at the word level for a total of 62% of the total workbook pages. In the 1989 series studied, the proportion of pages dedicated to phonics below or at the word level is 50% at the kindergarten and readiness levels.

Table 4 Percentages of Phonics and Word Level Pages in 1989 Series

		Total Pages	Phonics & letter	Word level	Combined Phonics and word level
Holt	Level K	48	11 (23%)	1 (2%)	12 (25%)
	Level 1	74	42 (57%)	3 (4%)	45 (61%)
	combined	122	53 (43%)	4 (3%)	57 (47%)
McGraw	Level A	126	58 (46%)	1 (1%)	59 (47%)
	Level B	94	51 (54%)	5 (5%)	56 (60%)
	combined	220	109 (50%)	6 (3%)	115 (52%)
	Combined	342	162 (47%)	10 (3%)	172 (50%)

The 12% decrease in workbook pages focused on the phonics-word level explains the 12% decrease in decontextualized skills shown in Table 3. Appendix E provides the 1988 breakdown for comparison.

Vowel Control Within Connected Text

Following the K and R levels, each publisher provides connected text or story in each of the preprimers and primers. The texts of the first story in each of the first preprimers is printed below for comparison.

Economy 1986

I See a Boat

I see a boat.
See a boat?
I see a boat.

Houghton Mifflin 1986

We Can Go
by Joan Lynn Carbonali

I can go.
Can you go?
Help. Help.
I can not go.
I will help you.
You can not help
I can not go.
I can help you.
You can go.
I will go.
I will help you.
You can not help.
Can you go?
I can.
We can go.
We can.

Scribner 1987

Run, Run

Run, Nan.
Run, Dad.
Dad and Nan run.
Dad and Nan run and run.
Dan and Nan run.
Dan and Nan run to Dad.
Run, Dan.
Run, Nan.
Dan and Nan run.
Dan and Nan run and run.

Macmillan Connections 1987

by Senior author, Dr. Virginia Arnold,

Nan likes to read.
Nan can read to Don.
Don likes to read.
Don can read to Nan.
Nan likes to read and jump.
Don likes to read and jump.

Scott, Foresman 1987

Pam Has a Cat

Joe has red yarn.
The cat likes the yarn.
The cat has the yarn!
The cat runs.
Joe runs.
Pam runs.
Joe has the red yarn.
Pam has the cat.
Pam has red yarn.
The cat has red yarn!

(In the story above, the word yarn is superimposed over an illustration of yarn.)

Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich 1987

Come Out Chip!

Bird is out.
Chip is not out.
Chip is in.
Bird said, "Come out, Chip.
You and I can run."
Chip said, "I will not run,"
Bird said, "Will you come out?"
Chip said, "Yes, Bird.
I will come out.
I will not run."

McGraw-Hill "1989"

I Can Read

I can read.
I can do it.
I can read a book.
Can you do it?
Can you read?
Jump in.
You can do it.
You can read.
I will read a book.
You will read a book.

Holt "1989"

Sand

Nan sat on the sand.
Maxwell sat on the sand.
"See the sand," said Nan.
"I need sand," said Maxwell.
"I need sand," said Nan.
"I need sand," said Maxwell.
"I see Nan," said Nan.
"I see Maxwell," said Maxwell.
"See Maxwell and Nan," said Nan.

Purpose for Reading

The purpose for reading the preprimer stories above, including the 1989 stories and those published earlier, is set by the text. The teacher is intended to open the manual and follow the directions. The student is to read the selections carefully constructed to cover the vocabulary list and the skills on the scope and sequence chart and complete the accompanying worksheets in order to be allowed to go on to the next component of the series.

View of Language

On the Program Profile Continuum of Readiness in the Basal Reader a predominance of synthetic text and authentic stories which have been adapted to match the synthetic text in terms of vowel pattern, words and syntax indicates a word recognition theory of reading. In psycholinguistic theory, authentic texts chosen on the basis of predictable language and interest would be used from the first day of reading instruction.

Nature of the Text

Tables 5, 6, and 7 show the nature of the text found in the connected text of the basal reader readiness/priming sequence. Table 5 shows each book of each publisher.

Table 5 Nature of Text Found in Basal Readers PP1 - Primer

Publisher	Level	Synthetic	Adapted	Authentic
Holt	PP1	11	0	2 poems (read by teacher)
	PP2	11	0	2 poems (read by teacher)
	PP3	11	0	2 poems (read by teacher)
	P	8	7	7 poems (read by teacher)
McGraw-Hill	PP1	9	1 1 Big Book	1 Big Book to be read by teacher
	PP2	9	1 2 Big Books	1 poem (read by teacher)
	PP3	11	0	2 poems 2 Big Books (read by teacher)
	P	14	7	4 4 read alouds (by teacher)

McGraw-Hill offers two versions of its reading program: McGraw-Hill Reading and McGraw-Hill Integrated Language Arts. Stories in Big Books are included in preprimers only in the Integrated Language Arts version.

Table 6 shows the percentage of synthetic text across the readiness/priming sequence. The upper portion of the table shows synthetic text as compared to all selections included in preprimers and the primer of each publisher's series. The lower portion of the table compares synthetic selections to be read by students to only those selections to be read by students.

Table 6 Percentage of Synthetic Texts in Preprimers/Primer

	Synthetic Selections	Total Selections	Percent Synthetic
Holt	41	61	67%
McGraw-Hill	43	69	62%

	Synthetic Selections	Total Selections Read by Students	Percent Synthetic
Holt	41	48	85%
McGraw-Hill	43	59	73%

The quantity and percentages of synthetic, adapted, and authentic text in the two 1989 series are combined in order to compare with the earlier study. In the 1986-87 series, 75% of the connected text in the readiness/priming sequences was synthetic text, created around the controlled vocabulary. In the 1989 series, 64% of the connected text included in the two series readiness/priming sequences was synthetic. However, most connected text selections included in the 1989 readiness/priming sequences which do not conform to the controlled vocabulary are to be read by the teacher rather than by the student. When looking only at those selections intended to be read by students, there is a greater emphasis on synthetic text. A closer look at pieces which have been adapted show that they more closely resemble synthetic text than the authentic pieces from which they were adapted.

Table 7 Nature of Text 1989 Series Combined

	Synthetic	Adapted	Authentic
Including text read by teacher			
	(84) 64%	(19) 15%	(27) 21%
Including only text to be read by student			
	(84) 78%	(16) 15%	(7) 7%

As shown in Table 7, 7% of the text to be read by students throughout the priming sequence of the two 1989 basal reader series is authentic text.

Purpose for Text

Related to the issue of the nature of the text provided for fledgling readers is the issue of purpose of the text. The vocabulary control makes it clear which words students are to be taught prior to reading the text. Students then practice those same words by reading them over and over again in the synthetic texts. The two 1989 series are similar to the majority of the 1986-87 series in that an author is listed for each story, including all of the synthetic texts which bear little resemblance to literature to which an author puts his/her name.

Although merchandizing statements imply that there is award-winning literature at all levels, Holt provides an "Awards Listing" which starts at the Primer, level 5. At level 5, they list the names of three authors who have written synthetic text or have adapted stories to meet

the requirements of controlled vocabulary as found in all basal readers. They do not mention Mitchell and Marjorie Weinman Sharmat, authors of the three preprimer texts. McGraw-Hill states that "Literature is widely accepted as the basis of good reading instruction" (teacher's edition, p. ix), but offers synthetic text (73%) in its priming sequence. The heading (teacher's edition, p. vi) "Texts as Literature, not Texts as Tasks" is no more true of the McGraw-Hill readiness/priming sequence than of other basal reader series. Their claim "to help learners monitor their reading and internalize the strategies of fluent, adult readers" cannot be supported with the texts and teacher instructions supplied at the priming level.

Views of Learning and the Learner

In the earlier research, it was documented that student learning is demonstrated by moving through the components of each level of the series, rather than through active participation in authentic literacy events. Each publisher provides testing in order to "place" students in the framework of its concept of the hierarchy of "skills" necessary to learn to read. Those tests (Table 9) start at the very beginning levels of the readiness/priming sequence and continue throughout the reading program.

Table 8 **TESTS/MANAGEMENT** used in Readiness/Priming Sequence

****

Holt

Primary Placement Test
End of Unit Tests (forms A & B) starts with Primer
Skills Mastery Tests

McGraw-Hill

Assessment Forms A & B
Pre-Book
Holistic Critical Thinking Survey
Placement Forms A & B

****

Young learners are viewed as passive and weak, completely dependent upon the program to provide component skills necessary for sufficient letter and word knowledge to become readers. As shown in Table 7, only those words previously taught within the controlled vocabulary of the program are deemed appropriate for students to read. If other text is included, the teacher reads it.

View of Teaching and the Role of the Teacher

Both Holt and McGraw-Hill provide detailed directions regarding the materials to use, the sequence in which to present each component of the lesson, what to write on the board, and what questions to ask. Holt provides a script for the teacher, including "suggestions that the teacher make some 'asides' that model such strategies as updating earlier text information ("It sounds as if Arthur is in the city now. Let's see what happens."), that draw inferences ("I don't think Arthur's mother really thinks he went to the moon."), etc." (Holt Teachers Edition, p. T.xiii) While the language in the teachers edition of the

McGraw-Hill series has been softened somewhat and looks less like a script, it is equally as detailed, notwithstanding statements mentioning the "notion of empowerment and decision-making" for teachers and "empowered and independent" for students (McGraw-Hill Teacher's Edition, p. vi).

As with earlier versions of basal readers, the teacher is viewed as a technician and manager of the program: testing for placement, using the vast materials provided, correcting workbook pages, assigning reteaching pages, and guiding children through the components. The teacher, with teacher's edition in hand, holds all the directions and most of the correct answers, although there are times when discussion is encouraged. The ratio of teacher directions as compared to student texts in the preprimers and primer is 2.43:1 as shown in Table 9. A constant and continuing problem of using synthetic texts created for the purpose of exposing children to the controlled vocabulary previously taught is that it provides little opportunity for important and authentic discussion between teachers and students in regard to the shared experience of having read the text. Synthetic text and text adapted to match synthetic text in terms of the grapho-phonic and syntactic cueing systems make up 93% of the connected texts students read throughout the priming sequence of the 1989 basal reader series. These severe limitations in available text sharply reduce the likelihood of their being meaningful discussion possible following any of the selections which children read within these portions of the basal reader.

Table 9 Each Publisher: Pages in Manual Compared to Pages in Student PP1 - P Texts

	Teacher Manuals	Student Texts	RATIO
Holt	1267	356	3.55:1
McGraw-Hill	886	531	1.66:1
Combined	2153	887	2.43:1
Compare to mean of all publishers in 1986-87 series			3.15:1

The object of much of the instruction provided within the teacher's editions of the priming sequence (preprimers and primer) is the recoding (or decoding) of synthetic texts and repeated practice with the words, letters, and sounds within those texts. According to the theory of reading on which the basal readiness/priming sequences are based, those students who are capable of dealing with the lowest levels of the series are most likely to be allowed to progress on toward more substantial reading and to read authentic literature outside of the basal reader, while it is the student with the least background in authentic text for whom the reteaching portions of each lesson is provided. It is traditional for students less proficient with the components to be grouped together for the reteaching sessions, while more proficient students are allowed to go on with the more independent "extending" activities, which may include authentic reading and writing experiences.

As with the 1988 study, the 1989 basal reader readiness/priming sequence is technological and behavioristic rather than self-actualizing and transactional. Lessons are planned in great detail in both series

to cover skills listed in their scope and sequence chart. As with earlier versions, one must examine those skills and the scripts which accompany them to determine the quality of instruction directed toward children.

Table 10 Lesson Plan Format

Holt	1) Preparing for the Selection 2) Reading for Comprehension 3) Developing Reading and Thinking Skills
McGraw-Hill	1) Introducing Skills for Unit X 2) Introducing & Reading the First Selection 3) Responding to, Extending, and Rereading 4) Applying Skills: First Selection 5) Introducing & Reading Second Selection 6) Responding to, Extending, and Rereading 7) Applying Skills: Second Selection 8) Reteaching and Enriching Skills Applied in Unit X

Impact of Psycholinguistics and Emergent Literacy

Nationally, millions of dollars are spent annually on commercial materials for readiness and reading, but do those materials reflect knowledge of child development, early literacy, and an understanding of the reading process?

> What impact has research in the areas of emergent literacy and psycholinguistics had on basal reader readiness materials?

Both of the two series produced in 1989 include "Big Books", a concept related to emergent literacy research and practices, in which the experience some children have had at home is extended to the classroom by extending "lap reading" to a larger group. Holt's Big

Books are simply the preprimer stories blown up to a larger size. McGraw-Hill's Big Books are adapted or authentic pieces of literature in the larger size. Neither publisher seems to understand that Big Books are intended to provide text in which the semantic and syntactic cueing systems are so predictable that a child is able to read the text easily regardless of his/her expertise with the grapho-phonic cueing system.

All of the research involving psycholinguistic theory and emergent literacy indicates that from their earliest experiences with literacy, children need meaningful, authentic literature. According to the merchandizing and philosophical claims accompanying the newest basal reader series, they provide excellent literature at all levels, including award winning literature. As shown in Table 7 of this paper, however, this claim is unfounded in the readiness/priming sequence of both series with authentic texts making up only 7% of the texts read by students. It appears that award winning excellent literature which is available for children at these levels does not meet vocabulary control criteria required of word recognition theory and therefore is rejected by basal reader companies.

Within the readiness/priming sequence, letters and sounds are deemed prerequisite to reading, and children who have not "mastered" the abstract phonics-related skills included in each scope and sequence chart are retaught and practiced until they do so. Meanwhile, their peers are allowed to read. This traditional practice (Applebee, Langer & Mullis, 1988) widens the gap between those who come to school with a strong background in literacy and those who who have not. Within a

psycholinguistic framework, children would be supported while reading authentic books, poems, and songs, which is how, according to all emergent literacy research, the "abler" children become able.

In all areas of the Program Profile Continuum Survey of Readiness in the Basal Reader both the 1988 study and the current study of the readiness/priming sequences in basal readers indicate that publishers' theoretical orientations are those associated with a word recognition view of readiness and language. Learners and teachers are viewed as completely dependent upon the basal reader manual and materials.

Conclusions

According to psycholinguistic theory of reading, there are four cueing systems required to be in operation simultaneously in order for meaningful, proficient reading to take place: semantic, syntactic, grapho-phonic, and pragmatic. The readiness/priming sequence provided with basal reader series focuses predominantly on the grapho-phonic system, both in the readiness workbooks and in the priming "stories". Although many writers including Carbo (1988) have come to understand that the road to success in beginning reading is not paved with intensive instruction in phonics and decoding skills, Holt continues to use Becoming a Nation of Readers based on Chall's (1967) great debate as justification for a focus on phonics and words in the readiness/priming sequence. McGraw-Hill does not discuss the issue, but devotes 52% of its R/R workbook pages to decontextualized phonics and word (table 4). While the two 1989 series offer slightly fewer pages of decontextualized

phonics and other decontextualized skills in workbook activities than their earlier counterparts (Appendix A), the connected texts (stories) children are expected to read have not changed. In 1989 the Holt preprimer texts reflect a high level of control in terms of vowel pattern known to many as an intensive phonics approach to beginning reading, but both Holt and McGraw series are equally constricted in terms of the semantic and syntactic cueing systems, known as primerese (Simons & Ammon, 1988).

Psycholinguistic research has impacted the basal reader publishers' use of such terms as emergent literacy, comprehension, and great literature in their philosophical and merchandizing statements. Regardless of those terms, however, they continue with the word recognition practices of viewing letters and sounds of letters as <u>prerequisites</u> to reading and of controlling vocabulary in connected text as if it were a necessity, as regarded within the word recognition theory of reading. Within the concept of skills as a prerequisite, children who do not prove "mastery" of letters/sounds in tests and on workbook pages are <u>retaught</u> letters/sounds rather taking part in authentic literacy events in which they are likely to generate meaning and the need for letters and sounds.

As in the 1988 study, it appears that the impact of psycholinguistics and emergent literacy is limited to philosophical and merchandizing practices, with minimal impact on the vocabulary controlled texts provided to students and step-by-step instructions to

teacher/managers who are required by the bureaucracy to use the basal reader.

Historically, when fault has been found with some aspect of a particular basal reader, the bureaucratic response has been to purchase a different basal reader series that promises to right that particular wrong. As teachers become professionals, however, they study the theoretical base of reading rather than limiting their decision-making to which commercially prepared materials to administer. Although there are and will continue to be those teachers who think they require precise directions written by "experts" who know more than they, educated professionals are taking responsibility for their own education and work with children.

Basal reader publishers and educators in bureaucratic roles making financial and programmatic decisions tend to take a pessimistic view of teachers' ability to understand the complexities of reading instruction. Shannon (1989) provides a basis for understanding this present state of reading instruction the the United States.

> In order to defeat the rationalization of reading programs, teachers and students must understand how that rationalization came to exist, how it controls their lives at school, and how and why it is now maintained. Moreover, they must realize that current organizations of reading programs are historical constructs--the result of past negotiations of rules and meanings among unequal participants in reading programs--and therefore, that these organizations can be changed.
>
> (Shannon, 1988, p. 132)

Rather than continuing to look for simplistic, foolproof solutions to our problem of helping children to become literate, more complex

solutions are available. They, however, require that each teacher and administrator not only learn about what reading is, but also look at the materials provided to teachers and students by the publishers of any and all basal readers, particularly at the readiness/priming level, and decide if they keep the promises made in accomanying merchandizing and philosophy statements. This research concludes that they decidedly do not.

Appendix A

PROGRAM PROFILE CONTINUUM SURVEY
of
READINESS IN THE BASAL READER
(Goodman, Freeman, Perkins 1988)

WORD RECOGNITION THEORY.....PSYCHOLINGUISTIC THEORY

I. READINESS

General Readiness or Word Recognition Reading Skills?

1. Specific Reading Subskills — General Readiness Subskills — Emergent Literacy

1986-87--- 89% ---------- 10.6% ----------
1989 --- 91% ---------- 9% ----------

Major Program Focus

2. Decontextualized skills — Minimally contextualized — Contextualized strategies

1986-87--- 78% ---------- 22% ----------
1989------ 66% ---------- 34% ----------

Relationship of Phonics & Letter Knowledge to Reading

3. Learn prior to learning words — Start with whole words — Learn words & phonics as the result of reading meaningful text

HBJ 37%
---- Economy 44% ----
Scribner 48%
Scott Foresman 52%
Houghton Mifflin 63%
Macmillan 75%
(all combined 53%) (additional 9% at word level)

1989 Holt 43%
1989 McGraw-Hill 50%
(both combined 47%) (additional 3% at word level)

Approach to Print in Connected Text

4. word approach		use of all cueing systems
---- All ----		

Purpose for Reading

5. set by text	set by teacher	set by student
---- All ----		

II. LANGUAGE

Nature of the Text

1. synthetic	adapted	authentic
1986-87 - 75%	8%	17%
1989 Including text read by teacher		
64%	14%	21%
Including only text to be read by student		
78%	15%	7%

2. Student text Only found in basal readers		Natural, authentic text
1986-87 --- 83%		17%
1989 ----- 93%		7%

Purpose for Text

3. Created to use specific words, types of words, and skills	Engage students in reading

---- All ----------

4. List author names for synthetic stories made up of word lists	List author names only when cited as adapted/authentic

---

Economy	Scott Foresman
HBJ	Scribner
Houghton Mifflin	
Macmillan	
1989 Holt	
1989 McGraw-Hill	

III. LEARNING

Views of Learning

1. Learning is demonstrated by moving through the components of the series	Learning is demonstrated by active participation in literacy events

---- All ----------

Views of the Learner

2. passive	active

---- All ----------

3. weak	strong

---- All ----------

4. dependent	independent

---- All ----------

5. controlled — transactional

---- All ----

IV. TEACHING

Teacher's Role

1. teacher/ scripted performer — teacher/ curriculum intiator

---- All ----

2. teacher/ technician — teacher/ educated professional

---- All ----

3. teacher/judge source of wisdom — teacher/mediator fellow learner

---- All ----

Pedagogical Approaches

1. recoding — whole language

---- All ----

Grouping

2. ability group — interest group

---- All ----

Approach to Readiness/Reading Problems

3. reteach — change focus

---- All ----

Curriculum Thrusts

1. technological — self-actualizing

---- All ----------

Presentation of Curriculum

2. behavioristic — transactional

---- All ----------

Appendix B

Perkins General Readiness/Specific Reading Theory Matrix

Publisher:
Level/Title:
Total # Pages:

	General Readiness Theory	Specific Reading Theory	Other
Nonprint			
Incidental Print			
Print			

Appendix C

Decontextualized Skills - Contextualized Strategies Checklist

Decontextualized Skills

_____ Positional Terms (front, above, below)/Directionality/ Order/Eye Hand Coordination

_____ Relationships/Categories/Classify/Similarities & Differences/Antonyms

_____ Color/shape/Pattern/Size

_____ Number Identification & Counting

_____ Phonics/Rhyming/letter recognition & formation,

_____ Word identification & Matching

_____ Name pictures and objects

_____ Total Pages of Decontextualized Skills

Minimally Contextualized Skills

_____ Oral Language Related

_____ Comprehension (event sequence, cause effect, details, main idea)

_____ Predict Outcomes

_____ Whole Sentence

_____ Wordless storybook or story

_____ Reality and Fantasy/story structure

_____ Total Pages of Minimally Contextualized Skills

Appendix D

READINESS IN THE BASAL READER, Doctoral Dissertation 1988

Table 5.4 GENERAL READINESS Each Book Each Publisher

level	TOTAL GNRL READINESS	nonprint	inc.print	print	%GNRL RDNS
ECONOMY					
K	126	52	52		41%
R	110	26	26		24%
PP1	78	4	4		5%
PP2	78	3	1	2	4%
PP3	78	3	2	1	4%
P	94	4		4	4%
HBJ					
R	126	18	18		14%
PP1	62				0
PP2	46				0
PP3	46				0
P	94				0
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN					
K	128	15	13	1	12%
K	84	8	8		10%
PP1	80	4	4		5%
PP2	88				0
PP3	80				0
P	128				0
MACMILLAN					
K-R	96	16	14	2	17%
R	88	7	7		8%
PP1	33	1		1	3%
PP2	36				0
PP3	27				0
P	80				0
SCOTT					
K	142	47	21	26	33%
R	153	19	10	9	12%
PP1	46	3		3	7%
PP2	36				0
PP3	44				0
P	94	1		1	1%
SCRIBNER					
K-R	92	50	46	3	54%
R	92	30	21	9	33%
PP1	96	5	5		5%
PP2	96				0
PP3	128				0
P	126				0

Table 5.5 SPECIFIC READING SKILLS Each Book Each Publisher %SPCF

level	TOTAL	SPCF READING	nonprint	inc.print	print	other	RDNG
ECONOMY							
K	126	74	34		40		59%
R	110	84	3		81		76%
PP1	78	74		4	70		95%
PP2	78	75			75		96%
PP3	78	75			75		96%
P	94	90			90		96%
HBJ							
R	126	108	14		94		86%
PP1	62	62			62		100%
PP2	46	46			46		100%
PP3	46	46			46		100%
P	94	94			94		100%
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN							
K	128	113	22	23	68		88%
K	84	76			76		90%
PP1	80	76	3		73		95%
PP2	88	88	2		86		100%
PP3	80	80			80		100%
P	128	128			128		100%
MACMILLAN							
K-R	96	80	26		54		83%
R	88	81	31		50		92%
PP1	33	32			32		97%
PP2	36	36			36		100%
PP3	27	27			27		100%
P	80	80			80		100%
SCOTT							
K	142	84	23	1	60	11	67%
R	153	134	26	19	89		88%
PP1	46	43			43		93%
PP2	36	36			36		100%
PP3	44	44			44		100%
P	94	93			93		100%
SCRIBNER							
K-R	92	42	8	1	33		46%
R	92	62	15	12	35		67%
PP1	96	91			91		95%
PP2	96	96			96		100%
PP3	128	128			128		100%
P	126	126	3		123		100%

Appendix E

Combined Results 1988 Study

DECONTEXTUALIZED SKILLS - CONTEXTUALIZED STRATEGIES
LEVELS K, K - R, R

****

Decontextualized Skills

Positional, Directionality, Order, Eye-hand	63	(5%)
Relationships, Categories, Classification	67	(5%)
Color, Shape, Patterns, Size	58	(5%)
Numeral Identification and Counting	11	(1%)
Phonics, Rhyming, Letter Recognition/Form	659	(53%)
Word Identification and Matching	111	(9%)
Total Pages of Decontextualized Skills	**969**	**(78%)**

Minimally Contextualized Skills

Oral Language Development	30	(3%)
Comprehension and Sequence	96	(8%)
Predict Outcomes	16	(1%)
Story or Wordless Picture Story	59	(5%)
Whole Sentences	57	(5%)
Memorize and Recite	10	(1%)
Total Pages Minimally Contextualized	**268**	**(22%)**
Total Pages	**1,237**	

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